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AUTHOR Acker-Hocevar, Michele; Touchton, Deborah

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how teachers described current decision making structures, culture, and the power/micropolitics of their work, examining how they used their agency to accomplish work and make decisions together under Florida's reform. Data came from interviews with 1996 and 1997 elementary educators selected as teachers of the year. The interviews addressed their perspectives on site-based decision making structures within their work contexts and relationships, examining: formal and informal work processes that led to decision making, their definitions of teacher expertise, power relationships between different groups, and how they used their personal power in school. Overall, teacher leaders were able to envision the broader impact of decisions made by administrators and teachers. Those who exerted the most agency had the most empowering principals and the least disempowerment in their work contexts. They were respected and valued by colleagues and principals. They worked within and across school boundaries and structures to establish social linkages and networks among their peers and within the community. Their stories illustrated how six empowerment/power dimensions (autonomy, political efficacy and expertise, responsibility and accountability, collegiality and status, resources, and hierarchical relations) appeared under the framework of structure, power, and culture. (Contains 52 references.) (SM)

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A MODEL OF POWER AS SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: TEACHER LEADERS DESCRIBE THE PHENOMENA OF EFFECTIVE AGENCY IN PRACTICE

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Michele Acker-Hocevar
Florida Atlantic University
Boca Raton, FL

Deborah Touchton
Stetson University
Celebration, FL

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A Model of Power as Social Relationships: Teacher Leaders Describe the Phenomena of Effective Agency in Practice

This study examines how teachers describe current decision making structures, culture, and the power/micropolitics of their work. We are interested particularly in how teachers use their agency to accomplish work and make decisions together under reform in Florida. To achieve this, the paper examines the findings from six in-depth interviews with elementary teachers selected as teachers of the year during 1996 or 1997. We investigate their perspectives of site-based decision-making structures within their work contexts and relationships. These six teacher leaders' perspectives are of interest to us to gain a better understanding of how they might exercise influence, which we call agency, in their practice, and how effective it is under present reform efforts.

Dimensions of the Model

The present research extends Bennett and Harris's (1997) "Three Dimensional Model of Organizational Operation" regarding the mutual interdependence of culture, power, and structure to add stories told by teachers to investigate this assertion. Additionally, we examine how the "Dimensions of Social Relationships: An Agency Model for Power" might appear in practice under this umbrella of structure, culture, and power (Acker-Hocevar & Bauch; 1998) (see Appendix A). We situate the six power dimensions within the Bennett and Harris framework. The dimensions are: (1) *autonomy*, (2) *political efficacy and expertise*, (3) *responsibility and accountability*, (4) *collegiality and status*, (5) *resources*, and (6) *hierarchical relations*.

For purposes of this study, we examine several scholars definitions that lend themselves to defining agency in relation to the six power dimensions that comprise the model. For example, Giddens (1984) describes power as social relationships in which individuals have the necessary capabilities to intervene in events and alter their course. Bandura (1986, 1997) describes effective agency through efficacy derived from mastery or expertise, physiological and emotional states in the form of arousal which lower or add to performance, vicarious experience or the degree to which a person can identify with a person or model, and social persuasion which relates to the truthworthiness of the persuader. From Hales (1995), we describe agency in terms of physical, normative, economic, and knowledge resources that afford greater influence and persuasion over events. And from Haugaard (1997), we view agency as the ability to use "multiple interpretive horizons" (pp. 184-85) to transcend dominance and see things from many perspectives. We suggest that responsibility and accountability may rest on the internal processes in the school to enable or "empower" teachers to take a legitimate role in their school's development. We use Kanungo's (1992) differentiation of empowerment from a relational and motivational dimension, and draw upon the recommendation that empowerment be viewed from the motivational dimension, rather than the relational one, as an antidote to powerlessness, as Kanungo suggests. This means that empowerment is a cognitive response to work conditions that either increase one's sense of intrinsic motivation or decrease it. In terms of hierarchical relations we view teachers access to power relations through applying the "rules of the game" to attain preferred outcomes. In other words by having a working knowledge of the system and how to get around certain obstacles in the formal power structures, these teachers might affect change (Clegg,

1989). We also think that these teachers may have the social capacity to gain group membership and leverage their membership in the school and beyond it to make changes (Barnes, 1988).

Thus, the "Dimensions of Social Relationships: An Agency Model for Power" rely on the ability of these teachers to exercise effective agency through various power dimensions such as: (a) freedom (choice) to make decisions and exercise independent reflection (autonomy); (b) application of knowledge to exert influence as empowerment through their internal motivation to gain and use knowledge to affect changes in learning and teaching (political efficacy and expertise); (c) use of informal relations to wield group influence as legitimate in the informal group through valued interpersonal skills (collegiality and status); (d) access to rewards and sanctions to create possibilities for action (resources); (e) and manipulation of the rules to attain preferred outcomes (hierarchical relations).

This study is important because it investigates the personal perspectives of teachers in relation to their use of effective agency in school organizations. Thus, we can better understand how to assist teachers and principals in their work together to move beyond bureaucratic mandates and address substantive and cultural changes in schools. We are interested in how administrators use the full range of teacher expertise. Next, we examine a brief history of Florida reform and its present foci.

History of Florida's Reform

Florida's most recent history of reform runs parallel to several national trends over the last 10 to 15 years. These trends include raising academic standards, adopting decentralized authority structures, systemic redesign, standardized testing, increased parent involvement, and public accountability through the publication of individual school performance ratings (Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, 1997, p.14). The State's position at the forefront of educational reform in the Southeast reflects external pressures for national reform, and intensive internal pressures from a growing population, desire to attract economic resources, and changing state demographics (Doval, 1952; Gannon, 1996; Tebeau, 1971). Latest projections indicate Florida will be the third largest state by the year 2000.

In 1990-91, after almost a decade of creating new state programs accompanied by state regulations and categorical funding, the State returned to three central themes: (a) school-based management, (b) accountability through student assessment, and (c) fiscal deregulation. This accountability legislation purportedly frees local educators from unnecessary state bureaucratic control while simultaneously institutionalizing a design for holding schools accountable for student performance at the local sites.

Despite this dramatic shift of authority from the state to the local site, established norms of organizational power arrangements might thwart intended state changes. Many of these norms, embedded in power routines and relationships, lie beneath the surface within the day-to-day practices and structures of everyday school life (e.g., Bredeson, 1993; Lortie, 1975; Johnson, 1990; Mitchell & Beach, 1993). How teachers negotiate these power routines will help us understand the norms of teachers' work lives, which might threaten or support the intended outcomes of recent reform efforts.

Researchers, Participants, Settings

This qualitative study is part of a larger study, which extends our work on teacher perspectives of power and empowerment. It helps us glean insights into the work context of teachers and the day-to-day practices, which foster conditions for increased involvement or decrease it. We conducted in-depth interviews with six teachers of the year from Florida. Before describing the criteria for selecting these outstanding teachers, we discuss the issue of researcher credibility.

Researcher Credibility

Researcher credibility is an issue in qualitative research. We would therefore like to explain our backgrounds and interest in this research. Acker-Hocevar was an elementary administrator before finishing her doctoral work at the University of South Florida (USF) in December, 1994. Thus, she was familiar with the initial reform efforts in Florida and interested in how they would impact the administrator-teacher relationships. Currently, she is an assistant professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Alabama. Her research focuses on how to build organizational capacity for change, specifically by altering power relationships. Touchton, a fellow doctoral student with Acker-Hocevar at USF, is currently working at The Suncoast Area Center for Educational Enhancement. She designs professional development for teachers to implement the Sunshine State Standards. Her dissertation work examined the relationship of professional development on site-based management practices. Her findings indicated that teacher involvement in shared decision making was nominal. She is familiar with reform in Florida and works closely with many educators in schools throughout the State assisting teachers with their application of the standards. Although we began this study with some assumptions, such as wondering about the level of teacher involvement in decision making, we were optimistic that these teachers would offer us some fresh insights on how they negotiated the system to affect change. We knew, therefore, that our distinct perspectives would offer each of us, at different times, insider and outsider views of the reform underway; Touchton with her experience in the State, and Acker-Hocevar with her perspectives from outside the State.

Selection of Participants

Like other states, Florida annually designates an "outstanding" teacher from each of its 67 diverse school systems defined by county boundaries. Florida public schools employ approximately 129,229 instructional personnel. Teacher award criteria include: (a) demonstrated leadership at the school, district, and/or state and national levels; (b) possession of a superior ability to foster excellence in education; demonstrated exemplary interpersonal skills (e.g. with parents and the community); (c) evidence of collaboration with other professionals; (d) and a strong commitment to effective teaching and learning (Florida Department of Education, Division of Human Resource Development, Office of Professional Training Services, 1997).

Generally, we might assume, then, that these select teachers have mastered political power arrangements in a way that allows them to be seen as highly successful practitioners with influence. Their status and expanded roles within school-wide improvement might suggest that these teachers would exemplify changing beliefs about power, particularly because they represent the "ideal" teacher and are held up as models

for other teachers by the State. On the other hand, these teachers could be the most compliant of teachers, politically selected by their counties to make them look good.

We knew from the Acker-Hocevar and Bauch (1998) study, that overall, teachers of the year felt *less powerless* than their non-award counterparts; we wondered why this may be true. We identified elementary teachers from six different regions of the state and intentionally selected teachers who had degrees beyond the bachelors. These teachers represent small, medium, and large school districts where there is a wide disparity in the range of socio-economic levels of students, numbers of students on free and reduced lunch, English as a second language speakers, and students with disabilities. These teachers have witnessed first-hand the impact of Florida's school improvement and accountability movement on schools, administrators, teachers, students, and parents. As such, they offer a unique perspective over time to "reading" the changes in structures, culture, and power relationships. Teacher and school demographics are described next.

Teacher and School Demographics

June is a nineteen-year veteran who is African-American. She holds a Masters degree and is from a suburban PreK-5 school in a small to medium school district in north Florida. The student enrollment, the largest of the six teachers, is 808. The percentage of free and reduced lunch is very small, 3.1%. The school has a medium size population of 25.3% of the students with disabilities, 9% of the population is enrolled in the gifted education program, and .6% of their student population is classified as English as a second language (ESOL). The mobility rate of this school is the lowest of the six schools at 11.7%. The majority of the students are from professional, educated families. June is in her first year of serving on the Education Standards Commission, a commission appointed by the education commissioner. This committee is comprised of twenty-four members, 12 classroom teachers and the remaining 12 are college and university, public and private, community, business, and school board representatives (see Table 1).

Table 1
Teacher and School Demographics SumMaria

Teacher and School Demographics	Teachers					
	June	Nan	Lynn	Maria	Tim	Grace
Teacher Demographics						
Years of Experience	19	14	16	13	16	11
Year Teacher of the Year	1997	1997	1996	1997	1997	1996
Highest Degree	M. Ed.	Ed.S.	MA	M.Ed.	Ed.D.	M.Ed.
School Demographics						
Student Population	**808**	710	651	648	612	**550**
% Mobility Rate	11.7	40.2	30.5	55	**64.5**	35.2
% on Free/Reduced Lunch	**3.1**	59.3	50.5	64.8	**99.7**	50.5
% in ESOL	6	5.8	.4	10.5	**28.5**	1.5
% Students with Disabilities	**25.3**	14.7	22.7	15.2	6.7	21.4
% Gifted	**9**	1.8	0	1.2	5	2

Nan's K-5 school is located in a large school district in central Florida. She has 14 years of experience, has an Educational Specialist degree, and is Euro-American. The student enrollment of her school is 710, the second largest school of the six teachers. The percentage of free and reduced lunch at this school is 59.3%. In the area of special populations, 14.7% are identified as students with disabilities, 1.1% are enrolled in gifted education, and 5.8% of their students are classified as ESOL. The mobility rate of this school is 40.2%. Nan came to this school after serving in a district level position where she helped teachers with reading and writing programs. This school year, 1998-99, she is on maternity leave.

Lynn's K-5 school is in a small to medium school district in west central Florida. She has 16 years of experience and a Masters degree; she too is Euro-American. The student enrollment of her school is 651. The percentage of free and reduced lunch is 50.5%. The school's population of students with disabilities is 22.7 %, no gifted education program, and .4% of their students are classified as ESOL. The mobility rate of this school is 30.5%. The administrator has been the principal of this school for many years.

Maria's K-2 school is in a small rural district in east central Florida. She has a Masters degree, is Euro-American, and has 13 years of experience. The student enrollment is 648. The percentage of free and reduced lunch is 64.8%. The student population with disabilities is 15.2 %, 1.2% of the population is enrolled in the gifted education program, and 10.5% of their students are classified as ESOL. The mobility rate of this school is 55%. The school has a new administrator this year who is quite different from the previous administrator. The first year principal, as described by Maria, is "by the book."

Tim's K-5, Title I school is located in a large south Florida school district. He has a doctoral degree and 16 years of experience; he is Euro-American. The student enrollment of this elementary school is 612. The percentage of free and reduced lunch is the highest of the six schools, 99.7%. In special populations, students with disabilities are 6.7 % of the population, with 5% enrolled in the gifted education program, and 28.5% of the students classified as ESOL (the highest percentage of the six schools). The mobility rate of this school is high at 64.5%. This school was identified as a Critically Low School for two years, 1996-97 and 1997-98, but has risen since to a Level 2 school (critically low is the lowest rating for a school). Tim was at this school as a Teacher of the Year during the time it was identified as critically low. He moved to a high school in the same school district this year to head up a new program for students at risk. Tim's story is an interesting one in that he was able also to contrast elementary school culture with high school culture. Tim has participated as a member of the Florida League of Teachers for three years, a select group of outstanding teachers, who shape policy at the State level. He is also on the State Title I Task Force.

Grace's K-5, Title I school is located in a large school district in south Florida. She has a Masters degree, 11 years of experience, and is Euro-American. The student enrollment is 550. The percentage of free and reduced lunch is 50.5%. Students with disabilities are 21.4 % of the population, 2% of the population is enrolled in the gifted education program, and 1.5% of the population is classified as ESOL. The mobility rate is 35.2%. Grace was not at this school when she was a Teacher of the Year. Her previous

school had a higher mobility rate of 87.6%, and the percentage of free and reduced lunch was 74.1%.

Data Collection and Analysis

Teachers of the year were contacted in 1998 and asked to participate in an hour or longer phone interview. Actual interviews took place over a three month period in 1998. The conversations were recorded, and both Acker-Hocevar and Touchton participated in the phone interviews through use of the conference call technique. All interviews were taped and transcribed. Both Acker-Hocevar and Touchton had copies of all the interviews, which consisted of about 200 pages of text.

Each teacher was faxed or mailed ahead of time the questions that guided the interview. The questions are:

1. Describe the formal and informal work processes that lead to decision making in your school? Probes for this question are (What roles do teachers play? Administrators? How are people held responsible/accountable for implementing decisions? What role do you play in decision making? How is this similar or different from other teachers?)
2. How do you define teacher expertise? What is the teacher culture at your school for teachers to use their knowledge and expertise? (How are various levels of expertise utilized? How does expertise afford your involvement in decision making?)
3. Describe the power relationships within your school between different groups such as teachers and administrators? Probes for this question are (What do the teachers say about these relationships? How do you think about these relationships?)
4. Tell us a story about how you use your personal power in school? Help us to gain "insights" into how or what you value and why it may be similar or different from other teachers? Administrators?

We used a phenomenological approach like that of Graumann (1994). By that I mean that the everyday experience of the teacher is the starting point to discover the themes in participant language. As Graumann said, "we let...our subjects spell out the problems from their perspective, and above all, in their own words" (p. 286).

We established trustworthiness through individual member checks with all participants, researcher debriefing after each phone interview, arriving at agreement on all the codes and categories (usually semantical differences). We discussed each interview after first coding the interview. We followed the steps outlined in Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Miles and Huberman (1994). First, we identified the units of information in the transcripts. Second, we agreed upon several working categories to locate the specific units. And third, we grouped together the categories to identify major subthemes across all the interviews, lastly combining subthemes into the four major themes.

Findings

In this section, we discuss the common themes that emerged from the data The common themes are: (1) decision making structures, (2) teacher culture, (3) personal narratives, and (4) power/micropolitics.

Decision Making Structures

Today teachers are regarded as key players in the restructuring of schools and education (Joyce, 1986; Schlechty, 1990). Past educational reforms, grounded in Taylorism, isolated teachers from decision making and viewed them as workers to be told what to do, and how to do it (Callahan, 1965). Based on a 19th century industrial model, this hierarchical nature of public schools continues to promote an adversarial relationship between administrators as managers and teachers as laborers (Schlechty, 1990; Troen & Boles, 1994). The aim of restructuring is to reculture schools from teacher isolation and adversarial relationships with administrators (Lortie, 1975) who encourage collegiality and commitment (Lieberman, 1988). School change involves many key stakeholders in the decision making processes, chief among them being teachers (Schlechty, 1990; Sizer, 1984).

The American public continues to call for educational reform. Reports such as the *Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills* (SCANS, 1992), the Holmes Report, the Carnegie Forum, the Governor's Report on Education, *Goals 2000*, and Florida's *Blueprint 2000* identify changes that must occur to achieve success.

SCANS advocates for schools to become high-performance workplaces by restructuring around skills and competencies where "learning to do" is integrated with "learning to know" (SCANS, 1992, p. 12). SCANS provides school districts, schools, and teachers with the autonomy to affect change to benefit students, and focuses on suggestions to empower teachers to develop new pedagogical and decision-making skills.

The Holmes Group's, *Tomorrow's Teachers* (1990), and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, *A Nation Prepared* (1986), calls for empowering teachers. Recommendations include: restructuring teacher preparation programs; restructuring schools to provide a professional environment for teachers to work and learn; restructuring the teaching force to create new roles for teachers to provide active leadership in the redesign of their schools; and giving teachers a greater voice in the decision making that affects school governance (Carnegie, 1986, Holmes, 1990; Troen & Boles, 1994). The Carnegie Report (1986) specifically emphasizes "teachers should be provided the discretion and autonomy that are the hallmarks of professional work" with the "authority in making the key decisions about the services they render" (p. 56). Further, the authors believe that, without teacher support, reforms will be short-lived, and substantial success in school reform will come through creating a new profession of well-educated teachers, prepared to assume new powers and responsibilities in redesigning of schools for the 21st century (Carnegie, 1986).

In two separate in-depth studies of schooling, Sizer (1984) and Goodlad (1984) echo similar conclusions pertaining to school improvement and restructuring. Sizer posits that one imperative for better schools is for teachers and students to be given the opportunity to be involved in decision making that affects them. Goodlad proposes "genuine decentralization of authority and responsibility to the local school within a framework designed to assure school-to-school equity and a measure of accountability" (p. 275) and the "guiding principle being put forward is that the school must become largely self-directing" (p. 276). For schools to be self-directing, teachers' and administrators' power relationships must change. Teachers must be more involved in all facets of school decision-making such as: (1) developing and delivering curriculum, (2) developing schools as learning communities, (3) developing their own professional training

programs, and (4) becoming self governing (Darling-Hammond, 1987; Darling-Hammond with Sclan, 1992; Darling-Hammond & Goodwin, 1993; Joyce, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1989; Schlechty, 1990; White, 1992).

Taking their lead from national reports, Florida developed and approved *Blueprint 2000: A System of School Improvement and Accountability* as the educational policy of the State. The intent of this legislation is to raise student and teaching standards and decentralize the system so school districts and schools are free to design learning environments and experiences to better meet the needs of each individual child (Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability, 1993).

All schools in Florida's 67 counties must annually assess their school's status in relation to the state's seven goals, set priorities, and develop their school improvement plan (SIP). A method for meeting this mandate was developed by the State. Annually, individual schools in each school district must create a School Advisory Council (SAC) comprised of teachers, students, parents, and local citizens representative of the ethnic and economic composition of the community. The purpose of the SAC is to assist with the preparation and evaluation of the school improvement plan. Each SAC is then approved and appointed by the school's District School Board for each new school year. Schools conduct a needs assessment annually of their schools to determine their status on the mastery of the seven Blueprint goals. After the needs assessment process is completed, the SAC develops *School Improvement Plans* based on the seven state goals. In addition to the state goals, school boards identify school goals and standards that reflect the needs of the local school community. School Boards are responsible for approving and monitoring district schools' SIPs. The first school improvement plans were due at the end of the 1992-93 school year and implemented during the 1993-94 school year. Teachers are active members of the SACs and School Improvement Teams (SITs).

Much of the school improvement and restructuring literature is based on the premise that teacher empowerment, through participation in school-based decision making, will lead to educational reform and school improvement. With the passage of Blueprint 2000, now known as *Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability*, the State of Florida implicitly mandated teacher involvement and participation in site-based decision making through the development and implementation of SIPs. The State of Florida continues its progress toward an integrated system of reform through the establishment of The Sunshine State Standards (SSS), which were developed and implemented in seven content areas: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Languages, Fine Arts, and Health. Districts began implementing The Sunshine State Standards during the 1997-98 school year. As many states turn to standards to improve student learning, Florida has not only developed and implemented standards-driven reform, but designed a performance-based assessment, the *Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test* (FCAT), to measure student progress in reading and math, based on the Language Arts and Mathematics SSS. Testing on Science standards will be implemented in 2003.

Since 1992, school-based accountability has been driving reform. Through the voices of these teachers, we find school-based decision making structures are in place in all of the schools, as dictated by law. How decision making is conducted, however, is quite another matter. The decision making structures are similar in the teachers' schools

based on the mandates from the state: school advisory councils (SACs) and school improvement teams (SIPs). Additionally, grade level teams and other committees are organized, when needed, in common areas such as discipline, technology, and communication.

The first theme is decision making structures; it has three subthemes: (1) Teachers' perceptions of voice; (2) Role of the administrator; and (3) Accountability and teacher surveillance. These subthemes emerged through our analysis of teacher responses. The actual voices of the teachers are used. Minor edits, however, were done to eliminate redundancy and make the texts more readable. The actual intent of the teachers' words was never changed.

Teachers' Perceptions of Voice

The differences in responses to the first question about decision making structures are around how teachers perceive school-based decision making, not whether it is present. Considering only the decision-making structures gives us little information on the power relationships within schools, and whether these teachers are granted a voice to make and implement decisions. Their stories, however, do provide us with insights into how they perceive their own power within decision making structures. Many of these teachers describe their colleagues as powerless even though the structures are in place to empower them. In many situations, this is a result of administrative control over the structures in place.

The following quote from Grace illustrates her initial optimism with shared decision making.

> Our school advisory council was a big thing for me and was definitely a decision making group made up of teachers, at least one teacher from each grade and parents… and within [the structure] no one individual had more decision making power in the council. How much participation and involvement and vision you have and wanted to have in that particular group was up to the individual. I felt like I had a role in the direction of the school.

Grace's comments illustrate how willing she was to participate.

Lynn's comments represent her frustration with labels ascribed to teachers who were not seen as "players." Teachers simply go now through the motions of decision making, but no one takes it seriously. Teachers simply want to avoid being labeled as a person who is not in appearance of moving in the direction of the district.

> You go to committee meetings anymore and everyone there sits stone silent and they wait to be told what to do. That's how it works. People refuse do things anymore. We don't really have collaborative decision-making. It's simply not there. You appear to have all kinds of stuff. People will do the work. They will produce documents. They will have something in writing that says, thus and so and such is happening, but they will do the bare minimum to meet the requirements. The idea of decision making is we will all get together at the end of the year and we'll go through the SIP (School Improvement Plan) and we'll get everyone to agree on a sentence and write it on the overhead and in the document. When it is finished, no one is really buying into things, or has a part in how things go. Because in the first place, somebody above the Principal has already made that decision.

Nan, in contrast, tells a very different story of her experiences.

> So when I think about decision making in the team, we made decisions about our instruction, about the way we grouped children, about the whole-we were able to start from scratch and create it all, including who would be involved in it, meaning teachers, parents and children (talking about a creating a multi-age instructional program).

June worked on a team where they made decisions together too. The team was central to decision making structures in the school. The teams were in close physical proximity, which enhanced their ability to work together. These teachers deprivitized their practice, actively learning from each other.

> The way our school is designed, four teachers have a common planning room where our desks are in the same place and we have the same planning time, so we have time together. We have grade level meetings. We plan together and share materials.

Each of the teachers expresses how they see themselves in their decision making structures. Some the teachers feel like they are exercising much agency through their voice in the process, others express very little impact. Where teachers make a difference, they are involved and actively committed. Where there is little or no impact, there is silence and withdrawal.

Role of the Administrator

When looking at decision-making structures, it is necessary to take a close look at the role the administration plays. Often, what they do, and what they do not do has a significant impact on decision making. We found that these teachers of the year recognized the role of the administrator in supporting and fostering teacher empowerment. These teachers reflected on how different principals influence the decision making processes by freeing people to make and implement decisions. Administrators have a direct influence on power relationships within their schools. Several of the teachers told stories about changing principals, going from an empowering principal to a non-empowering one. Others talked about administrators' leadership styles, which either enhanced or detracted from their participation in shared decision making.

June comes from a school where a school-based decision making model was in place for 10 years. This model was the result of design teams. There were clear lines of authority and school based decision making was done to change or implement a school-wide policy, adopt a new program or alter an existing one, and/or add or modify school improvement goals. The teachers voted every year as to whether they wanted to retain this model. June explains how their previous administrator trusted and supported them in their decisions.

> We had an administrator who was very willing to provide teachers with decision making power… our administrator actually relinquished his veto power so that his vote and his assistant principal's vote was equal to the other members. Now we are into our second year of a new administrator and things are different. You have different personalities in administrative positions. We're trying to keep this model going. What we've discovered is that the first administrator empowered us, left the reins loose in allowing teachers to make decisions and implement decisions more so than our new administrator. So that's what we're dealing with now. The shared

> decision making model still works, but it's different when teachers have been allowed to have certain administrative powers, I'd guess I'll call them. And then when those powers are reeled in, it's like you feel like there's something that has been taken away, that you were never supposed to have that type of power anyway. There is a strong power play right now because the teachers were empowered and now they feel that they are not empowered.

Maria describes how decision making appears to occur outside her school at the district level. With a new administrator, the principal appears to follow the book and district directives. She too has experienced changes in how she sees her role in relation to the new administrator.

> Since we have a new administrator, I think she is very by the book and trying to do everything. Which is fine, I mean that's what she's got to do. But for us there has been very little decision-making. And currently most of the decisions that have been made this year, that have affected us, have been county-level decisions---well, we're told they're county-level decisions that are just handed down. In fact, last year, we had changed math series and we had a county committee and the committee could not reach a consensus, so the county office just decided that none of the texts that we chose would suffice and chose a different one. And it's been a lot of that kind of thing-mostly handed down decisions. There's been very little discussion.

Maria's experience of powerlessness is more pervasive than the other participants. She sees the problem as a district and school problem. Tim, on the other hand, experienced a change in principals too. His new principal, however, recognizes and uses teacher leadership as she learns about the school and her role.

> We thought with the change of principals, because one was very into, you know, building teacher leadership, but the other one was just really, initially, a very wonderful person, just getting her feet wet as a principal. She was so busy trying to find out how to be a principal that she relied on all of us who already had experience. Our school was one of the worst schools in the county, but we changed dramatically over six years.

Tim now compares his high school experiences this year and sees very little teacher input in decision making. He sees the size of the school and the power that is delegated to assistant principals as problematic. The lack of communication among administrators leads to misconceptions about what is taking place by the principal. This places teachers in a precarious position, being in the middle between the principal and another administrator.

Grace tells a story about her involvement in a school committee at her present school. At the end of the year, the committee was eager to discuss their recommendations with the administrators. All their efforts and hard work for an entire year were dismissed in one sentence. Nothing was implemented. She said of another committee incident.

> I suppose we felt let down as professionals that we had done a lot of good work and it didn't go anywhere. I think there are teachers who really want to move mountains here (the school), but because they have had the same type of situations in their committees, you know, it stops with this administrator, it seems like their morale to want to do anything is "yeah, but its gonna stop here and we're never going to see any action."

The role of the administrator seems to influence the degree and extent to which teachers feel their efforts are valued. Motivation is either increased or decreased based on how the administration recognizes the efforts of teachers. The new principal at Tim's school is different than at Maria's or June's schools. This administrator acknowledges teacher leaders and uses them to learn about her role.

Accountability and Teacher Surveillance

With empowerment comes added responsibility and accountability. In all of the stories told by these teachers, the subject of raising scores and teacher accountability seems to be the most pressing. A sense of surveillance over their work implies that monitoring teachers' work will improve test scores. Maria's frustration is obvious.

> But there is a bigger emphasis on test scores at the county level. The evaluation process has changed drastically at our school....instead of two observations (a year) and an evaluation, we are getting two observations per week and an evaluation every 6 weeks. So I think the stress level has increased because of that...I feel very accountable and I'm sure that test scores will be an issue as soon as they are in.

Lynn shares the same concerns as Maria about the pressure put on teachers.

> Somebody has to be accountable. They are making the teachers feel awfully accountable.... And if you (administrator) don't recognize the expertise of your teachers, and continually lord over them, treating them like children and being flat out mean to them, you know then I guess you do have a lot to fear (laughs) because when the boom lowers, you are not going to have people backing you as an administrator.

Tim too is upset at how teacher evaluations are centering on tests children take.

> You know, teachers' evaluations are going to start centering on how well your students are doing on a test. And so I think what's gong to happen is that we are going to start focusing on how to get high scores and get away from some of the good fundamental practices that help improve education. It's not going to be on how am I going to help you improve, it's going to be, I'm monitoring you to see whether or not your kids are scoring well, because that's how you are going to be evaluated. Not to say that we shouldn't be held accountable for the academic achievement of our students, but we have to look at more that just tests scores.

The theme of decision making structures had three subthemes. The first was perceptions of voice. The second was the role of the administrator. The third was accountability and teacher surveillance. These subthemes appear to suggest that schools like June's, which institutionalized a decision making structure, were more successful in socializing a new principal to her role. The teachers exerted a collective agency and shared a common model for how to include their voice. In the other schools, the involvement and participation of the teachers was influenced greatly by the administrator. How teachers viewed their roles in decision making affected their perceptions of their empowerment or non-empowerment.

Teacher Culture

The teachers' opinions reflect a sense and an understanding of the varying teacher cultures existing in their schools. To understand these various forms that teacher culture can take; we turn to Hargreaves' (1994) typology of teacher culture. Teacher cultures provide the context for teacher work. Hargreaves identifies two important dimensions of

teacher culture: content and form. The content of teacher cultures is comprised of attitudes, beliefs, values, habits, and ways of doing things that are shared within a particular group, or among the teacher community within a school. The form that teacher cultures take represents the patterns of relationships and associations between members of the culture. Hargreaves identifies five broad forms of teacher culture: *individualism*, *collaboration*, *contrived collegiality*, *balkanization*, and the *moving mosaic*. He posits that the success or failure of educational change can be attributed to these different forms (relationships) of teacher culture in the school. Like Hargreaves, Sarason (1990) believes that through altering power relationships within schools, educational change will occur. He argues, "Schools will remain intractable to desired reform as long as we avoid confronting these existing power relationships" (Sarason, 1990, p.5) These relationships are between teachers and administrators, teachers and teachers, teachers and parents, and teachers and students. Teachers' responses seem to indicate that the teacher cultures contribute greatly to teacher's feelings of empowerment or non-empowerment.

Individualism Teacher Culture

The nature of teaching is a state of professional isolation, of working alone, separate from colleagues (Lortie, 1975; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996); this contributes to the individualism teacher culture. The individualism teacher culture isolates teachers from their colleagues and focuses their attentions to classrooms. Individualism, in itself, is not a negative condition; however, some researchers (Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1988) have focused on individualism as a psychological characteristic of teachers rather than a result of workplace conditions. Hargreaves (1993) argues that individualism is a consequence of complex organizational conditions and constraints that need to be attended to if individualism teacher cultures are to be removed. He identified three determinants of individualism teacher culture: *constrained individualism*, *strategic individualism*, and *elective individualism*. Constrained individualism occurs when teachers teach, plan and generally work alone because of administrative or other situational constraints, such as noninvolving styles of administration, school architectural structures, scarcity of planning space, shortage of teachers, and/or scheduling difficulties. Strategic individualism refers to the ways teachers actively construct and create individualistic patterns of work as a response to daily responsibilities of their work. Lastly, elective individualism, a preferred form of professional action for all or part of one's work, refers to a teacher's choice to work alone all or some of the time when there are opportunities to work collaboratively with colleagues. It is only when a majority of teachers isolate themselves creating a negative individualism teacher culture that one could suspect a system problem where teachers might be withdrawing from threatening, unpleasant or unrewarding working relationships.

Negative constrained individualism appears to be the case in two of the teachers' stories. They describe work situations where the administration has created a non-empowering rather than empowering atmosphere. Because administrators have created a workplace where teachers are not valued, teachers find staying in their rooms as safe. The following comments are examples of what Hargreaves calls constrained individualism.

Maria discusses how she views teachers trying to negotiate agency around the rigidity and behavior of the new principal. These teachers resist covertly the control of this

principal by exercising decision making within their classrooms in terms of materials they think are best for students.

> I do think we feel very isolated and that we don't, maybe, use our expertise as in areas of strengths and weaknesses as we should. Yes, we do make decisions, but they're more or less behind closed doors and we're not going to make it known. It's not an open thing. In other words, if I choose to do supplemental whatever, I'm not going to make it widely known because I don't know if that's going to be acceptable.

Lynn describes her response to the conditions that surround working in her school. Teachers practice avoidance and enter the silence of their classrooms.

> I immerse myself in my own world. I know what I have to say is not welcome, so I keep my mouth shut. Most people take the kind of apathetic attitude that I am going down to my room, close the door, and I am not going to have anything to do with it (school). It is very common to hear people say, "I just stay away from the front office; I never go down there. As long as I do my thing down here and put it on paper so it looks like everything is going just as planned, I spend my day, and I get out of here."

Grace relates how she stays in her room. The differences between the principal and assistant principal make the working conditions difficult for teachers. Many teachers are avoiding the administrator they view as negative.

> You know I try to keep in my room and do the best job that I can for the 22 students that I have. I think it's a particular administrator to be honest with you. I don't think its both administrators because one is positive and one is ..wants to make sure that she has the final word. I don't know whether that's a power kind of issue or if she's really a hard worker and wants the best for the teachers, students, and parents. But it seems like that's where the buck stops.

Isolation from administration and the activities of the school are a result of the administration not valuing the teachers' input. Teachers reflected feelings of disillusionment in participating in daily school activities. To save themselves from non-empowering feelings, they stayed in their classrooms, away from administration.

Collaboration Teacher Culture

The collaboration teacher culture supports the professional empowerment of teachers and fosters and builds upon qualities of openness, trust and support between teachers and their colleagues. Within this culture, collaborative working relationships between teachers are spontaneous, emerging from the teachers themselves; voluntary because of the perceived value of working together; development-oriented, to meet the need, not the mandate of their own professional confidence and expertise as a community; pervasive across time and space, it is not a scheduled activity; and outcomes are unpredictable because discretion and control over what will be developed is within the control of the teacher, not the mandate. Collaborative teacher cultures are generally incompatible with centralized school systems, and can cause difficulty for the administrator in providing the environment for a collaborative culture. These are not calm and politically quiet cultures. This culture builds collective agency where teachers are able to interact knowledgeably and assertively with the mandates of reform and accountability; able and willing to select which innovations to adopt, alter, and ignore as best benefits

their purposes and circumstances (Hargreaves, 1994). Two examples of this culture are June's and Tim's schools.

June was in a school, as you may remember, that had site-based decision making long before it was mandated in Florida. The maturity of the teachers in wanting to work together was a valued norm in her school.

> Well as I explained, we are really going through a change with the new administrator and the communication before we felt was more open, the communication now, we feel is more closed, and so what we have done, several times we've had informal faculty sessions, which the teachers called for. They said, we have to talk to administration. And out of the faculty meetings, came a group called the communication committee...once a week every week one team member from every section every grade level meets with the administration.

Tim relates a story about how he spear-headed a grant that focused on inter-agency collaboration. The intent of the grant was to work collaboratively across agencies to address the needs of the students in the school. Remarkably, no new programs were instituted. The focus of the grant was to work on collaboration among partners.

> We wrote a lot of grants...the Foundation had a whole different focus and they really wanted us to look at holistic improvement...We tackled our full-service school problem (it wasn't working). I was given leeway with this (the money) and I structured it. The grant was based on the input from teachers...whatever the committee wanted, we did as long as it was approved by the advisory council.

For June, because there was a collaboration teacher culture in place, a change of administration did not totally disrupt the teachers' collective agency. They found a way to stay empowered by using their collective voices. Tim's school also showed the resilience of a collaboration teacher culture by working together to bring their school from a state designation of "Critically Low" to a district designation of a demonstration site school where the district "started sending other schools to see us and we were one of the seven schools in the county designated as a site for other schools to come and visit." Like June's school, Tim's school also changed administration. It was apparent in both of these cases that the strong collaboration teacher culture was the glue that maintained the teachers' sense of empowerment through the change.

Contrived Collegiality Teacher Culture

Contrived collegiality teacher culture is seen as the antithesis of collaboration teacher culture. Collaboration among teachers is not spontaneous, but regulated by administration; is compulsory, not voluntary; is fixed in time and space--scheduled by administration; implementation-rather than development-oriented--teachers are told what to implement; and outcomes are predictable rather than unpredictable. This culture replaces spontaneous, unpredictable and difficult-to-control forms of teacher-generated collaboration with forms of collaboration that are captured, contained and contrived by the administration, giving the impression that there is a collegial culture in place when in fact there is little to none.

Systems must give schools and teachers the responsibility for development as well as implementation of state reform initiatives, providing teachers the flexibility to work with one another in developing programs of their own. This is empowering teachers rather than "cosmetically empowering teachers" (Hargreaves, 1994) through contrived collegial

cultures. Grace's response is a good example of schools that look like they are collaborative when they are not.

> And each year teachers are assigned and sometimes signed up for, if they don't actually participate, to be on the subcommittee of the plan. At each meeting we are responsible for keeping notes and an agenda. We have, I guess, something like a record sheet that basically has what the expectations are, how we go about meeting those expectations, and who is responsible for meeting those expectations as well as the time frame. And when we meet each month we review these and take these to the advisory committee. But I think the perception is that most teaches feel they are not going to get any further than the one administrator. So after we exhaust all our ideas, typically, no action is taken.

Contrived collegiality teacher culture may be a result of Florida's educational reform and accountability movement Teachers are suppose to be involved and included in the decision making process. Therefore, administrators are forced to "make the process look good," causing teachers to feel that the process is a sham.

Balkanization Teacher Culture

In the balkanization culture, teachers work in separate and sometimes territorial groups, which gives them identity and provides the basis for power, status, and resources. This teacher culture is mostly found in secondary schools where teachers are often departmentalized and are specialists in a discipline. Balkanized teacher culture is defined by the pattern of interrelationships among teachers. Teachers work neither in isolation, nor with most of their colleagues as a whole school, but in small sub-groups within the school. Low permeability, high permanence, personal identification, and a political complexion characterizes this form of teacher culture. The political complexion often causes divisiveness in the school because of the imbalances of power and status. These kinds of power relationships are evident in several of the teachers' stories.

Although June's school has aspects of a collaborative teaching culture there is also evidence that balkanization is present.

> We are pretty much separated by grade level, because all of us teach the same things and we work and we share with each other. The different grade levels know who is good and who is not. I don't know if this is a power play, but sometimes I hear comments in my group. I know our third grade team is strong. In 10 years, we have had a teacher of the year every year, and in our third grade team now, four teachers have been teachers of the year.

Nan's balkanization is based less on physical structures and more on philosophical differences among the faculty.

> There is a group of us who meet together and are like-minded, but we sought each other out. We feel supported by the principal---she has allowed us opportunities to do whatever we wanted to do. Another group of teachers feel blocked by the principal---they don't think philosophically about teaching and learning the same way the principal wanted to move. Then there is a group who doesn't care about it (where the principal was moving the school).

Mosaic Teacher Culture

The fifth teacher culture is what Hargreaves (1994) calls the moving mosaic, similar to Senge's "learning organization" (Senge, 1990). In this teacher culture, the

school is committed to continuous improvement; teachers work together closely as colleagues in planning, decision making, and classroom practice; all or most teachers are leaders at some point or another; the principal is the leading learner. This culture, described by Hargreaves as emergent, is flexible, responsive, dynamic, and has blurred boundaries. Hargreaves cautions that the moving mosaic, although it sounds like utopia,

> can easily become the manipulative mosaic, with teachers and schools having responsibilities without the power, as the center retains control over the essentials of curriculum and testing, over the basic products which teachers must turn out. Much of the future of teachers' work and the degrees of empowerment contained within it will be settled by how this emerging context of organizational flexibility is determined and defined. (p. 69)

Of the six teachers interviewed, Tim's school was the closest to this description of teacher culture. The school had been identified as one of the worst in the county, a Critically Low School. Through grants written by teachers, and teachers working for the students, the school became a district demonstration school. However, this school is beginning to have its problems because it is getting larger, as described by Tim. "Our former principal was up for principal of the year and we started getting credibility for the school through a lot of things we were doing. And then we started the Resource Room (for teachers) because there wasn't a place in the school for teachers to come together collaboratively and work.

The next theme emerged from the stories that teachers told us. We found that each teacher has a personal narrative that was woven throughout the interview. We share these with you now.

Personal Narratives

Personal narratives are broad structures that engage us in constantly organizing and reorganizing our experiences to make sense of ourselves and our actions (Johnson, 1993). We tell stories which shape our relationships with others, and inform our institutional commitments (p. 150). These narratives, woven into the historical fabrics we are a part of, are responses to circumstances confronted in our lives; circumstances we interpret often through our behaviors-in-action.

Johnson (1993) refers to these behaviors as actions possessing "imaginative synthetic unity" (p. 152). Thus we write and rewrite our stories into meaningful and purposeful accounts through a process in which our stories become coherent. Our accounts, consequently, lend themselves to self-understandings, and offer us the potential for self-transformation. Through our reflections, learnings, and imaginings, we can engage in daily and ongoing processes of construction and reconstruction to consciously and unconsciously shape who we are.

Teachers face numerous challenges and problems in their work lives. The stories of teachers' lives are narratives, with "a stock of roles, scripts, frames, models, and metaphors..." (Johnson, 1993, p. 160). These stories suggest how teachers construct their roles as teachers, make sense of their worlds, and determine what is meaningful to them. The narratives are calls for action which motivate and enable teachers to exercise agency within moral understandings. These moral understanding involve a "broad range of imaginative structures, such as image schemas, various types of prototype structure, metonymy, and metaphors. As a result, they do not simply mirror some objective reality or

category. Rather, they define that reality by means of imaginative structure" (Johnson, 1993, p. 192).

To understand how the teachers in this study chose to exercise agency, we use metaphors, roles, scripts, frames, and models, as suggested by Johnson (1993) in his book, Moral Imagination. By using these structures we explore insights, raise questions, and view how certain moral issues are generated through these various lens. For example, how did the teachers choose to use their agency to make an impact with parents, students, colleagues, and also within the larger professional and political arenas of their work?

Responses which underlie these scripts, frames, and models, call often for action, in difficult circumstances. Johnson (1993, p. 195) believes that our "self-knowledge and our knowledge of alternative possibilities depend on self-critical reflection on our metaphors." We expand Johnson's concept to include the actions contextualized within organizational structures, power relationships, and cultural norms of teachers' work that add meaning to these teachers' work.

This study defines how these teachers use their definitions of psychological empowerment around four task-related cognitions--meaning, competence, choice, and impact (Kane & Montgomery, 1998) We begin with Tim's narrative around the metaphor of *advocate*, examine June's script for *fairness*, Lynn's frame for *enabling others*, Nan's model of *teacher professionalism*, Maria's role in her *relationships with the administration*, and Grace's frame of *innovation*. These teachers construct and reconstruct their stories within particular cognitive frames.

Advocacy

Advocacy was Tim's personal metaphor. He chose to be an advocate for other teachers, and this choice consistently brings him back to his role and identification with other teachers. "I can't forget that I am a teacher and that is where I am coming from. What is good for teachers is good for kids. I mean, that's been my whole philosophy. If I am going to be an advocate for teachers it is because I want to make them better advocates for students."

The metaphor of advocacy for Tim generates persistence. He explains he learned how to stand up for what he wanted even in the face of defeat. Tim saw many teachers get knocked down and give up. He explains often to other teachers that you may loose some battles and win others, but you "can't let the fact that you loose the battle mean you can't move forward with what you are trying to do."

Tim's advocacy role includes articulating the basic needs of teachers. "Until you take care of basic needs, you can't move to higher levels of performance. The lack of supplies, materials, information, and administrative directives which entrenches teachers in non-productive work eats away at their professionalism." Tim complains about the lack of time in schools, particularly larger secondary schools. Teachers don't have time to dialogue and reflect on their professional practices together. He strives to find ways for teachers to have opportunities for dialogue, reflection, teacher leadership, mentoring, and feedback for improvement and growth.

Fairness

June is motivated by an intrinsic set of rules around fairness formed by her race, religion, and concern for people. She relates how as an African American growing up in Washington, DC, she confronted unfairness when her father was transferred to Nebraska;

she was the only Black in her college classes at the university. She describes herself as a combination of what she knows and who she is as a person. "I'm a person when there is a problem, I can look for the positives and see a way to find the possibilities of a solution. I am seen as being very fair. I've had people tell me that. That's why people select me to be a facilitator. Colleagues feel that I won't represent any one group at the expense of another." Later June says, "Plus, I am a Christian so it's important that I do things the way I'm taught to do....If I hear something, I don't repeat it to anybody. And, if I am in group and I'm hearing a rumor, I will go to my room. Or, if I stay, I will find another point of view and share it."

June censors her actions in terms of what she views as fair, often taking risks to be a spokesperson for the group. She relates an incident where teachers and the new administration met in a faculty meeting; the meeting was tense. "...(N)obody would talk. I was a nervous wreck, but I thought this is ridiculous." June felt that if the teachers' complaints were to be understood, someone had to voice these complaints. "So in the most positive way that I could, I started talking and then other people started talking, getting things going."

Enabling Others

Lynn's reference for action is to enable others through her emotional support. "I am very much in [support] that we don't keep doing things for people. We open up opportunities for people and we teach them how to run with it...I am not here to cripple people."

Lynn said she felt the pain of other teachers and saw her role as helping teachers who could turn around and help kids. She referenced her actions against her code of personal responsibility for enabling others to help themselves, particularly in viewing problems from the source of the problem. "Don't make it yours. Making it yours is not going to make it any better."

Lynn believes that being able to separate yourself from the problem takes a lot of self-discipline and

> ...putting aside your own needs and seeing the bigger picture. The first thing we want to do is righteously defend ourselves and sometimes righteously defending ourselves is not it. You have to know how to pick your battles...It is knowing how to stand there and not become a victim.

Teacher Professionalism

Nan is a take-charge person, a self-motivated learner, who identifies areas for her professional development and pursues those areas. Her model of professional development involves teachers in roles of examining their own practices and constantly improving their practices. Nan is most comfortable doing workshops that she has lived in her classroom. She uses her teacher expertise to befriend like-minded teachers who like herself, see improvement as a moving target, take charge of their professionalism, and study and reflect on their practice.

She sees herself as able to translate teachers' professional needs into meaningful actions through listening. "Listening to other people, knowing what teachers want to do, what they don't want to do, as well as insight, and a direction to move in terms of best practices is important." Nan is respectful of other teachers and feels strongly that teachers need ongoing challenges for professional growth.

Her schema for professional development affects how she sees other teachers as learners. Some teachers are willing and open to learn new teaching techniques that are philosophically aligned with their beliefs. Other teachers are resistant to any change, and the last group of teachers gives the appearance of change, but nothing substantive occurs to their beliefs and practices.

Relationships

Maria's agency is defined by her relationships with the administration. She worked under three different types of administrators we categorize as laissez-faire, charismatic, and authoritarian. Her description of the laissez-faire administrator is "He was very laid back and whatever you want to do was okay, as long as everything is going along fine." The second administrator was creative and innovative and "student achievement improved." Presently, with the third administrator Maria sees herself as isolated. She relates how the present administrator took away the keys from all the teachers, changed the way they did their plan books, and instituted a policy regarding teachers' children coming to the school.

> You know we have always had access to our classrooms; we've always had keys and things and that's changed. We can't go and come as we please anymore--we had to turn in our keys--and the way we've done our plan books has changed and for a lot us change is not an issue. It's the way the change [occurred]--it's more of the reason for the change, or the way the change was bought about. Even child care (laughs)....our children could be bused here after school, or if they were here, stay with us until we left....Now they can't, they have to go to daycare.

Maria sees her agency for action diminished with the current administrator. She contrasts this administrator with the charismatic administrator who was at the school the year before as the "best teaching year I have ever had....He could walk in with an idea and we would think 'Oh my goodness, we can't do that, and by the end of the meeting, we were sold and ready to go.'"

Three different types of administrators evoked different actions and perspectives for how Maria thought about her role as a teacher. The most recent change in administration was drastic and stressful. Maria feels resentful that every teacher is treated the same and her administrator "goes by the book." Low morale at the school is a problem. Maria is trying hard to understand this administrator's actions.

Innovation

Grace sees herself helping other teachers devise creative ways to help students learn. She contrasts her present school with her previous one.

> I just don't see a lot of progress being made. I came from a very progressive school with a principal who really believed in giving people the freedom to try out new things she thought were beneficial. I see this school as very rigid, and this is what you can do and this is what you cannot...We are far behind times at his school. I've tried to tell teachers some of the things we're doing at my other school; they can't believe it...I have tried to share at this school, but nothing happens.

Grace sees the inability of teachers to picture something different as blocking their openness to possibilities and innovation. This lack of imagination, coupled with an administrative team that blocks teachers' recommendations, perpetuates a cycle of no

action, a lack of experimentation, little dialogue, fosters teacher withdrawal from participation. Grace confides she is leaving this school at the end of the year. She has been there for two years and does not picture herself in a school like this where nothing happens.

All of these teachers' narratives have certain common denominators. Teachers talk about their need to make a difference in their profession. They view their choices and impact in relation to the freedom given by the administration. Lynn talks about her need to be involved and make an impact where she can. She sees her ability to engage honestly as limited. She withdraws in silence and works outside of her school to impact education. She confides, "I am very involved politically outside of school, but no one knows this."

Other teachers like Nan see their influence as a choice. "I felt like I had a whole lot of influence...It was up to me. The administrator trusted me and was philosophically similar to me in how she thought about teaching and learning." Tim too speaks of how he worked "side-by-side" with the principal and had much power granted to him.

Maria observes that her principal "felt so pressured and held so accountable that pressure was put on her." She was puzzled at the principal's request that any ideas be submitted formally in written proposals, and the twice a week classroom observations for "time on task" to raise test scores, which kept teachers busy preparing for the next observation. Maria was not sure that the request for written proposals was authentic, an not a cover-up and delay tactic for the principal not to make any decisions.

Administrators affected the extent of agency exercised by teachers individually and collectively. June notes, "We had an administrator who was very willing to provide the teachers with decision making power." Our present administrator is "someone who is learning and does not have much experience. It's hard because if we work in the manner that we are used to working, we are [seen as] usurping the administrator's power..."

Grace saw much of what teachers wanted to happen at her school stopped by one of the administrators who "controlled" everything. She bemoans the fact that she does not see the children at her school being prepared for the next century. Her influence can extend only so far. "We're stopped. We have no one there for us a lot of the time." Grace reflects on her failure to make change. "I just say, well maybe I need to try another aspect. Maybe I didn't present it in a way that seemed appealing. I try not to let it--even though it does--get me down."

Their positive attitudes, willingness to see the big picture, ability to examine alternative views, and insights about their roles, frame their personal narratives. These narratives around advocacy, fairness, enabling others, relationships, professional development, and innovation help us understand what drives their agency as people. Now we turn to the power relationships and micropolitics of the school.

Power/Micropolitics

Institutions such as schools are defined by their broader organizational purpose, functioning, and value-systems, though these may be loosely linked. Devolved authority has the potential to "decouple" (Weick, 1969) or strengthen these bonds depending on how power is exercised. Individual teachers bring their own socially conditioned beliefs, values, and perspectives into a school and therefore have views, or at least assumptions, about the curriculum, teaching practices and other processes and technologies of schooling.

Micropolitics takes into account that not all teachers have the same capacity to persuade others to adopt their views. Moreover, self-interest is involved, since some practices may serve the interests of a particular individual, or groups, but not those of others. There are therefore, direct and indirect incentives for teachers to bargain or negotiate with one another and with the administrators of their schools, although much of this activity may be implicit (Ball, 1987; Hoyle, 1986), while other activities such as teacher governing bodies or alliances with other teachers and administrators may be more explicit.

Throughout the teachers' interview, we see evidence of how the underlying micropolitics of the schools and their districts impacts the agency these teachers influence. Often, the knowledge of how to work around the hierarchical relations is beneficial, but only in larger districts where there is less chance of being stopped in your actions. In Tim's case, he desperately wanted to keep the resource room where teachers met to work collaboratively. When the new principal came, he orchestrated an event, which made if difficult for the new principal to take away the resource room and use it for overcrowding in the school. Tim relates this story.

> You know we had this resource room–I don't know if I explained this to you. That was one of the things that I did right. I worked with a reading teacher and we realized that there wasn't a place in the school for teachers to come together collaboratively and work together cause you can't do it in the lounge and you can't do it in your room. So we took half of our classroom, which was an old portable at the time, and we partitioned it off and we changed it into a teacher resource room. We brought all the resources in there, all the reading books, the Xerox machine, the book binder, and everything was accessible to the teachers. Nothing was "fill out a form and we'll get it to you in two days." Everything was right there for the teachers. We put computers in there...I was afraid that the new principal was going to take it away, because we started running into some problems with over population with the migrant kids we picked up. So, not knowing if she would or not, we did something kind of weird. We dedicated the room to our old principal. We got this huge brass plaque and named it after her. We had a big dedication ceremony. So we invited everybody from the region to come in and said "now, how can you take it away from us?"

The distribution of power within an institution is as much a part or a reflection of its culture as it is of its structures. Structure, culture, and power interpenetrate one another. Micropolitical theory seeks to identify the overt and covert ways groups devise certain rules for behaving that impact, both in private and public ways, who maintains control over what issues, and who acquires and exercises control and power over others (Hoyle, 1986; Malen, 1995). Often, these rules are explicated in the everyday practices within the context and relationships in teachers' worklives. These rules become part of their tacit knowledge about the culture and micropolitics of the school (Ball, 1987; Beare & Slaughter, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989). The stories told by Grace and Lynn illustrate how in Grace's school, teacher expertise was not valued, while in Lynn's school, the principal controlled too much.

Grace wrote grants for herself but could not engage others in the process with her. She reframed problems to brainstorm different strategies to make an impact. She felt

others resented her status as teacher of the year when she changed schools. "At this school, I have had to contend with, 'Oh, you know more than the rest of us.' Or when I've made mistakes, 'Oh, I'm glad you made a mistake, I didn't think you made any mistakes.'" Grace tried to keep a sense of humor about all of this, but she was hurt. She worked with her team as the leader and her principal complemented her on her ability to bring cohesion and direction to her team. She was able to get support for a Parent's Math Night from other teachers at the school, but she felt her impact was limited.

Lynn exerted influence outside of the system through her political involvement on State task forces. She had to see a way to make a difference. If she could not do so in her school, she would do so outside of it. She talks about how she would plant ideas with the principal so that the principal would think that it was her idea, and give permission to Lynn to go ahead.

Tim relates how teachers can team up with administrators and form alliances which can be damaging to a school. "If you have teachers who are into power, you can have teachers make an alliance with administration that can be very detrimental to the school." June speaks of something similar when she says, "...(T)here are certain individuals that want their way---you don't talk to this person because what you say will go straight to the principal. Or , whatever you say will be turned around and it will hit the ears of so and so. And you can see that this person does and says certain things to be in the 'in-group.'"

Three of the teachers told stories around the micropolitics of parental support and involvement. In June' s school, parents were very active. They met together away from the school to discuss new programs that they wanted implemented at the school. June talks about how the site council is implementing a policy to restrict parents from dictating curriculum changes at the school.

> So formally, we've got site-based decision making, the school advisory council, then we also have decisions that are kind of made through the PTO, but we've had to try to control that through our site-based. Actually, we have an item going through site-based now to control parents trying to tell teachers what to teach. So we are working on that now. If we have a policy in place with the guidelines then we don't have the butting heads. We have such high parent involvement. We have been like the number one school in the whole district that puts in the most parent volunteer hours. It's always been that way. Parents come to PTO meetings, they go to board meetings, they go to school zoning meetings, these parents know everything. The school advisory council incorporates parents. They know what levels students are supposed to be achieving, so they want programs instituted that they have read about or heard about or observed in other schools that work. And so they want to make the decisions to put them in our school. But, you know, it just can't work that way. So that's why right now we're just putting into place some guidelines that the parent group has to follow. Like say, for example, they come up with this–I mean their ideas are good! You know they want to have multi-cultural day, well that's great and we were doing that every other year we would have our multi-cultural day and then the odd year we would have the Olympics and it would be a school-wide thing. Then they wanted to have a science day and a math day and what happened is when the standards got into place we didn't have all these days we could give for math day and science day and so then

we had to start looking at how much time we have, what we have to teach, and do these activities work toward the standards. That's where we are now, giving the parents guidelines. These are the standards, you know.

Nan frames how teacher view parents in the same way she sees the different teacher groups in the school. The group of teachers who worked well with the principal saw parents as partners, whereas the group who did not work well with the principal viewed parents as the enemy. The last group who did the minimum involved parents only to the extent that the principal required.

Maria who was the least able to exercise agency of all the teachers sees parents as having far more power than teachers. She sounds angry at the fact that parents can go see the superintendent and get what they want, whereas she could talk to the superintendent, but it would not have any impact on how things might be done in her district.

The influence of teachers in the system is a combination of how well they know how to work the system, their perceived expertise, the influence afforded them, the collective agency of the group, and the norms within the school and district. But there is something else. Tim relates how shocked he was to find out that in his district, one that ostensibly supports site-based decision making, principals are told to make the decisions. He describes his concern about the disconnect in rhetoric between what teachers are told and what administrators are told. He wonders how new administrators joining the ranks, often young and inexperienced, might make sense of this and involve teachers.

We have presented four themes and subthemes from the teacher interviews. In qualitative research, the links to theory emerge after the data are analyzed. The findings suggest that teacher cultures, decision making structures, and power/micropolitics are intertwined. Some teachers are afforded power, others are not. There is evidence that something else, namely actions that are an affront to the teacher's dignity and respect create negative conditions for teachers' work in schools.

Links to Empowerment and Dysempowerment Theory

The teachers interviewed in this study are different in many ways. Nevertheless, they share many common elements such as being perceptive about the politics of their work, articulating several viewpoints about an issue, focusing on continual growth and development, and expressing an overall concern about their involvement in decision making to impact improved learning and teaching. Findings suggest clearly that each teacher' culture is unique, however, some cultures support conditions of empowerment more than others. What is not expected, is what Kane and Montgomery introduce as a concept of "dysempowerment," which they define as "a process whereby a work event or episode is evaluated by an individual as an affront to his/her dignity, hence a violation of a fundamental norm of consideration and respect, resulting in a debilitating set of responses with the potential to disrupt the individual's work-related attitudes and behavior" (p. 264).

Dysempowerment originates with an individual, work group, or an organization when one's dignity is affronted. Feelings of humiliation, anger, indignation, and hostility are the likely affective responses, which can impair trust, commitment, motivation, cooperation, and innovation. Obviously, this effects an individual's performance-on-the-job. Kane and Montgomery (1998) stress that dysempowerment is not the opposite of empowerment. Rather, it can co-exist with empowerment to varying degrees and levels of

intensity. Thus, the cognitive interpretations teachers give to events are couched in norms such as fairness, benevolence, and being cared about, courtesy, and sincerity, which can evoke varying levels of positive cognitive and affective responses, reflected in individual, group, and organizational attitudes and behaviors. On the other hand, where there is a lack of fairness, courtesy, and caring, there is a propensity to withhold effort, cooperation, and particularly in cases of verbal abuse, disrespect, and unfairness, there is related stress, depression, and anxiety. Consequently, cognitive interpretations either lead to increases or decreased in such things as commitment and trust.

The teachers' stories lead to vicarious experiences learned from their observations and experiences, personally, with other teachers, and organizationally (Bandura, 1986). These experiences, for example, are sometimes felt vicariously, as when Lynn tells about the pain she feels for other teachers. She is expressing her anger at what she witnesses because she identifies with these teachers. She is distraught by the actions of the administration and below relates how labels are disrespectful of holding a differing opinion.

> Teachers are talked down to something terrible. If you have the nerve to speak out, to have a suggestion. to think of a better way, and it does not go along with what is being pushed, then you need to be re-educated or ignored. And if you keep opening your mouth, you are put down...begin to acquire labels such as 'rigid' and 'not-flexible enough.' So you wear these labels--you get branded; it is extremely unfair.

Maria tells the story about how the keys to teachers' classrooms are taken from them--very unfair. Grace shares a story about her principal withholding praise from her for receiving two grants and how the work of a committee for an entire year is dismissed hastily. On the other hand, June talks about the relationships at her school with a positive tone. "I am in the kind of school that is nurturing. I am treated with respect and people encourage me to be a facilitator and a leader."

These different examples illustrate what Montgomery and Kane (1998) view as two different perspectives. The first perspective, empowerment, is related to subjective cognitions of task-related phenomena where there is evidence of teacher effectiveness, innovation, fairness, commitment, and trust. The second perspective, polluting events which engender dysempowerment, result in anger, distrust, hostility, and fearfulness. This drains energy for collective agency in the organization, not just from the individual but the group and the organization over time. Dysempowerment is the subjective perceptions and responses to work events that are negative responses 'because of their potential to impair but not necessarily negate the motivation" (p. 264) of teachers.

The loss of commitment because of poor leadership is hard to measure on an achievement test. Principals can choose to develop supportive teacher cultures that engender responsiveness, innovation, and respectful ways of being. They can encourage meaningful involvement, recognize teacher expertise and utilize it, and be a cheerleader for the teachers in the school. Or, they can provide no time for reflection, dialogue, and ignore teacher knowledge and expertise, take no action on decisions, discount the work and suggestions of teachers, and create a culture of disrespect, where as Lynn says, "people feel crucified."

Conclusion

This research suggests that teacher-leaders are able to understand the "big picture," and envision the broader impact of decisions made by administration as well as teachers. Teachers who exert the most agency in this study have the most empowering principals and the least "dysempowerment" in their work contexts. They are treated with respect and valued by their colleagues and principals. They work within and across school structures and boundaries to establish social linkages and networks among their peers and within the community.

The stories illustrate how the six empowerment/power dimensions: (1) autonomy, (2) political efficacy and expertise, (3) responsibility and accountability, (4) collegiality and status, (5) resources, and (6) hierarchical relations appear under the framework of structure, power, and culture. Teachers with more agency use their autonomy to make decisions supported by their administrators, reflect, and dialogue with other teachers. Tim, Nan, and June exercised the most autonomy, while Maria had the least in relation to her school and also her classroom. Autonomy affords other opportunities for creative ways to address challenges in the schools and build collective agency among teachers.

Political efficacy and expertise impacts learning. June states, "It's knowing the group of students you are teaching and the best way to get knowledge to them. Knowledge reflects what I know about my students, their individual learning styles, the content, and what you know and share with other teachers."

Tim, after going to a new school feels like a beginning teacher. His principal wants him to begin immediately to work with other teachers that can be "salvaged," but Tim says no because he has no credibility yet with his peers. He knows he has to establish a relationship with them first. This awareness of how to treat other teachers as professionals depicts how all these teachers work as colleagues with other teachers.

The issue of responsibly and accountability expresses teachers' concerns about the state's accountability measures (e.g. The Sunshine State Standards and the FCAT). Teachers feel responsible for their students' achieving the State standards and doing well on tests. They are concerned, however, that the push to increase test scores will be detrimental to students in the end because innovative and creative teaching and learning practices might be sacrificed to the test.

In all cases, the teachers spoke of writing grants, both for their own classrooms and the school. They are resources to other teachers by opening their classrooms to their colleagues to observe what they are doing. They reflect on the knowledge and skills of how to work within the system to the benefit students and teachers. Their keen sense of the formal structure and hierarchical relationships helps them find ways to work around the bureaucratic rules, without loosing sight of their values, or doing unethical things.

Power relationships, critical to the change process, can transform or maintain the culture and structures of schools. The interdependence of structure, power and culture is corroborated by these teachers' stories over and over again, no matter what the situation – empowering or dysempowering. Teachers cannot be given power (empowered) without accepting it. This has to occur on the part of teacher. On the other hand, administrators must know how to create conditions that foster empowerment and release their control over teachers, alter their roles, and engender commitment, trust, and respect.

Florida is transferring power to teachers through the Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability legislative educational policy. However, what was not

anticipated, was that this transfer could get stuck because the principals do not know how to give up control. The structures, culture and power relationships in many of these schools does not reflect the intent of this legislation and there are several reasons why this is so. The first reason is that changes in the practices of how principals are held responsible for their schools is at odds with school-based accountability. The way we traditionally think about leadership is control.

Change in Administrative Practice

The teachers recognized in all cases the difficult position of administrators in this time of school accountability and raising test scores. Several of the teachers remarked that principals are not taught how to manage people, how to empower them. Administrators need to "know different types of personalities and how people interact and interrelate with each," as June points out. Further she says, "they have to feel comfortable that they are not less of an administrator because they are empowering teachers." If teachers are to be empowered, administrators must be educated in how to empower them. They must also recognize sympTims of "dysempowerment." Further, teachers must accept the responsibilities for accountability that come with increased power.

Finally, it appears to us, with the pressure on all educators today, principals must find ways to support teachers, not to increase their stress through surveillance and micro-management techniques. These administrative actions neither build professional teacher cultures, nor improve practice. Rather, principals should err on the side of promoting risk-taking, seeking to address teacher and student needs that focus on teaching and learning. Principals might play a sponge role in protecting teachers from unnecessary pressures from their districts and the state. Instead, they could seek to build collective agency, reflective practice, and common planning times for teacher dialogue. Principals can foster development by focusing on the internal strengths of their staffs, negotiate external demands that are stressful, and provide opportunities for growth. By providing an open-minded stance that enables teachers and administrators to listen to each other, educators can learn together. Evaluating the effects of programs, policies, and services across different client groups assesses their impact. Knowing what works and what doesn't, how to work with people, to manage conflict, and not being afraid to try new things is essential for today's leaders who wish to build empowering teacher cultures.

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Appendix A

DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS: AN AGENCY MODEL FOR POWER

CULTURE

Meditation of external influences and Instructional norms and expectations

Assumptions concerning organizational purpose functioning and value systems

Legitimization of particular forms of actions in relationships

Exercise of power by virtue of person

Legitimization of exercise of power located in person

Distribution of power by virtue of Office

STRUCTURE

⇓

Distribution of decision-making responsibilities

⇓

Definition of ways of deciding

Legitimization of exercise of power located in Office

POWER

⇓

Social relationships that constitute effective agency

Resources	Sanctions/Rewards
*Political Efficacy	Empowerment
*Hierarchical *Relations	Manipulation of Rules
*Collegiality	Group Influence
*Responsibility	Accountability
*Autonomy	Independent Reflection

* (Acker-Hocevar & Bauch, 1998)

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